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MAYOR MICHAEL R. BLOOMBERG AND SENATOR HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON ANNOUNCE DOWNTOWN AIR QUALITY TASK FORCE

Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg was joined by United States Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton today to announce the formation of the Lower Manhattan Air Quality Task Force to oversee environmental issues in and around the World Trade Center site. The Task Force will be led by the Office of Emergency Management (OEM) and will coordinate the activities of City agencies concerned with Lower Manhattan's environmental safety. Federal and State agencies will be invited to participate and the City will continue to work with the Environmental Protection Agency on air quality issues. OEM will establish a hotline staffed by employees of the New York City Department of Health and the NYC Department of Environmental Protection to answer questions and provide information on the environmental conditions in downtown Manhattan. Dr. James Miller of the Department of Health will support the Task Force on health and safety issues.

"Public confidence in the air quality around the World Trade Center site is essential to the revitalization and economic growth of downtown," said Mayor Bloomberg. "We cannot attract residents and businesses back into Lower Manhattan unless they know they are safe. The Office of Emergency Management will take the lead to make sure that the most up to date information is available and disseminated to assist the community in accessing the resources to ensure their offices and homes are clean and safe."

"I applaud Mayor Bloomberg for his leadership in taking this important step to ensure that the air downtown New Yorkers are breathing in their homes and workplaces is clean and safe. Information is the key to confidence, and confidence is the key to redevelopment and economic prosperity in Lower Manhattan," said Senator Clinton. "I am also pleased that following the hearing I held on World Trade Center Air quality last month, EPA Administrator Whitman committed to establish an Indoor Air Task Force at the federal level. Workers and residents in downtown Manhattan can be certain that all levels of government are joined in the effort to make certain the air they are breathing is healthy."

(more)

“The Task Force is a step in the right direction that will protect the resident’s of Lower Manhattan,” said Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver.

The hotline will be operational as of Monday, March 11th. The number will be (212) 221-8635 and the hotline will be staffed Monday through Friday between 11:00 A.M. and 7:00 P.M. Representatives from the City’s Department of Environmental Protection and Health Department will listen to public concerns and answer inquiries concerning indoor and outdoor air quality and the results of testing for asbestos, lead, mercury and other foreign substances. The information collected will also provide a tracking base for constituents’ concerns that can be used to identify those areas in need of remediation.

The Task Force will review all environmental testing data collected to date and interpret the results in language understandable to the public. In addition, the Task Force will undertake an aggressive community outreach campaign with pamphlets, a website, and maps to communicate environmental data and provide much needed information to Lower Manhattan residents and businesses. The Task Force will review the authorities of all agencies to determine the most appropriate methods for assessment, inspection, and, if necessary, enforcement.

“I am especially grateful to Senator Clinton for her assistance on this task force,” concluded Mayor Bloomberg. “The revitalization of Lower Manhattan depends on all levels of government working together seamlessly.”

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